2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.vii]

Acknowledgments

The present study is based on field work conducted during the years 1957 and 1958, under the support of a grant from the Emslie Horniman Anthropological Trust. To the trustees I owe thanks not only for their financial aid, but also for their personal interest and encouragement.

My academic debt lies above all to the Institute of Social Anthropology at Oxford and to its members under whom I studied. To them all I am sincerely grateful, and I hope that this work will to some extent justify their constantly cheerful, if at times somewhat skeptical, encouragement and optimism.

But for the patience and endurance of Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard, I might never have enjoyed the privilege of being an anthropologist. Dr. John Peristiany was my first teacher, and his personal interest and understanding helped me to find my way during the first erratic years. But to Dr. Rodney Needham I owe more than I can say, for he undertook to supervise this study and has nursed it along over a period of several years and across many thousands of miles of land and water. Despite all too infrequent opportunities for meeting, he persisted in his attempts to make the work more sound and perceptive. I am most conscious of many shortcomings; some due to the ever-restricting factor of time, but others due to the sheer difficulty of dealing with a theoretical and geographical area for which there is so little published material of real use. Largely because of this factor, the study is isolated and does not attempt to draw upon the comparative material that is available. Such comparisons can most fruitfully be made after further intensive field studies of the Mbuti have been made. The inherent problems of the field work have created many serious gaps that remain to be filled on the next field study, and this, together with the necessity for presenting a lengthy ethnographic description, has made the task of analysis infinitely more difficult. Dr. Needham's perceptiveness as well as his own field ex-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

net-hunters for a variety of reasons, their central location (see Map 2) being only one.

There were several more immediate reasons, which I give now, as the choice may be a point of some criticism:

1). I had already been among this band on two prior occasions, and had established with them a most friendly relationship that I knew would guarantee me immediate access to their forest hunting camps. Although I was known among other bands, there did not exist the same degree of intimacy and trust, and the Mbuti are by nature reserved and suspicious when faced with the prospect of having a stranger in their forest camps.

2) I was also well known to the Epulu villagers, and could anticipate the need for understanding and tolerance from this direction.

3) Father Schebesta (1957) had previously attacked my discussion of the significance of the music and ceremonial (Turnbull, 1955, 1957[1]) by saying that this same band was particularly acculturated and therefore not representative.[1] As the whole point of my argument was the superficiality of the acculturation, and granting that this band had all the appearances of gross acculturation, this seemed like an excellent opportunity for testing a hypothesis that I felt to be valid, and that I also suspected to have far deeper significance in the total Mbuti social structure than I at present recognized.

4) In selecting a net-hunting band I would at least be adding to Schebesta's general ethnographic description, which was mostly concerned with the archers, rather than be duplicating it.

5) Because of its central location I would be able to move relatively rapidly to other areas in the forest if the occasion demanded, and when in other areas I would still be able to stay within a few days' reach of the Epulu band, in case I needed to return. Also because of its central location, there seemed to be some possibility of establishing contact not only with other net-hunting bands, but also possibly with archer bands, in the normal course of the year's migrations.

6) The continued existence of Camp Putnam, on the Epulu River, offered me a base where I could keep essential supplies in safety, and where I would not alienate myself from the villagers with whom I would eventually have to work by having to stay at a government rest-house or with other Europeans.

[1] For a further clarification of Schebesta's attitude, see my article on the *nkumbi* initiation (Turnbull, 1957), his rejoinder and subsequent recantation (Schebesta, 1958, 1963).

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

rest-house or with other Europeans. Mr. and Mrs. Putnam had long established their own *bona fides*, and indeed fitted perfectly into the traditional village structure in this area, where a number of different village tribes converge. Their friendship for me placed me on a particularly favorable footing with both the villagers and the Mbuti, and I knew that I could count on protection from any interference from other Europeans, administrators included, who might wish to visit me. (Naturally I established perfect accord with the central and local administration, who offered every co-operation, but I was particularly concerned that I should not receive "friendly visits," as it was the policy of both villagers and Mbuti, for different reasons, to keep Europeans out of the forest.)

Having established my headquarters, building a somewhat larger but otherwise typical mud house on the fringe of the village where the Mbuti had their semi-permanent village camp (see Plan 1A, 1B), I paid my respects to the divers local village chiefs and head men, mostly of the Bira, Ndaka, and Ngwana tribes. At this time the local Mbuti band was in the village, but a sudden epidemic of stomach disorders, resulting in a number of unexpected deaths, caused them to leave for a prolonged hunting spell in the forest, taking me with them.

While the deaths, which included men, women and children, were most untimely and unhappy from a personal point of view, they achieved everything else that I could have wished for as an anthropologist. Prior to precipitating the flight back to the forest, they gave me an opportunity to study in the greatest detail the reaction to the death of an Mbuti in the village, both from the village point of view and from that of the Mbuti themselves. I at once witnessed what I had seen on my previous visit when observing the *nkumbi* initiation; namely, the almost desperate attempt of the villagers to assert authority over the Mbuti. In this case the attempt was made by controlling the mourning and burial proceedings, claiming that the Mbuti had no ritual authority in this respect and were dependent on their *kpara* ("masters"). The villagers attempted to subject the Mbuti to the supernatural sanctions of village lore, and then they attempted to assert more direct political control by calling on their own ritual specialists to determine the cause of the deaths, and to search for the witch responsible. This will be described later (pp. 74 *seq.*); it is mentioned here to show how closely I was thrown into contact, at the outset, with the Mbuti/Villager relationship.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

sults I wanted I had no alternative. Other methods would have produced different, though not necessarily contrary, results.

However, there were inherent limitations in the technique followed, which involved close identification and integration between myself and the Epulu net-hunters. For one, by identifying myself with the Mbuti, my relationships with the villagers were automatically worsened; the mere fact that I preferred to study the Mbuti rather than the villagers was ground enough for hostility. But being accepted by the Mbuti in their forest hunting camps was a privilege denied to most villagers (though few would have wanted it), and learning to speak the village language with a strong Mbuti accent that made it almost unintelligible except to other Mbuti added further fuel to the fire. This all made it extremely difficult for me to see the Mbuti/Villager relationship from any but the Mbuti point of view, though I tried, at the end of 1958, to establish a better rapport with villages both in and beyond the Epulu area.

However, it was impossible for me not to take sides. Had I wished to work as an outside observer I am not even sure that it could have been done, as I do not think such an observer would have been tolerated for long in the forest camps. And as an outsider I would certainly have been denied familiarity with many aspects of Mbuti life, particularly the all-important *molimo* festival. In fact, as an "insider" I was able to observe the process of exclusion of the few outsiders temporarily admitted to a forest camp. But in any case I was quickly forced by purely practical considerations to take sides.

During the burial proceedings in the village, for instance, in the first month of my stay, I was invited by both Mbuti and villagers to take part. But whereas the villagers wanted me to stand by and watch the digging of the grave under villager supervision, the Mbuti wanted me to help out with the digging. By acceding to the latter wish I automatically lost my status among the supervisors, and in fact became unclean and had to ritually wash myself with the other gravediggers. And during the post-burial meeting of the men, when the villagers all argued among themselves as to which Mbuti witch had caused the death, I had the choice of listening on one side of the grave with the villagers or of standing on the other side with the Mbuti and being associated in this way with their mirth and their ridicule of what was, to them, an utterly nonsensical procedure. And when on one occasion a burial took place on the morning of the day that a wedding was to be held in a neighboring village, I had the

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

choice of staying to listen to the villagers ceremonially wail on behalf of the dead Mbuti, or of going off with the rest of the burial party, as soon as the grave was filled, to the wedding. I found it more sensible as well as more congenial to prefer the wedding to the wailing.

These are only a few of the many instances where a choice had to be made, where no middle road was possible even had it been desirable. The result is then necessarily to some extent one-sided, for no matter how I tried to effect a balance by subsequent investigation, I still feel an urgent need to conduct further field work, taking the village standpoint.

Once started on the road, the process of identification was swift, but never complete enough to render it impossible to observe intelligently and with deliberate detachment. Such temporary blindness to other points of view as occurred took some time to wear off, and this was perhaps the major drawback of the technique, and one that should be borne in mind in the more interpretive parts of this work, for it resulted in a number of unasked and therefore unanswered questions.

Integration demanded a number of things, one of which was that I should at all times be as fully mobile as any Mbuti. This cut down the belongings that I could carry with me; a blanket, a single change of clothes, a typewriter, paper and pencils. With a bundle of this size on my back I was able to travel as fast as was necessary whenever the band moved from one camp to another. It meant that I was economically dependent upon the band, however, so some kind of equilibrium had to be reached. I was not successful as a hunter, being too large and clumsy, and I did not carry a gun nor did I wish to acquire food in this way. When within easy reach of the village, then, I would acquire supplies of village foods, such as plantains, beans, rice and peanuts, at the same time that the Mbuti got their supplies. Instead of barter or theft I used currency, but bought only comparable quantities of exactly the same kind of food as the Mbuti. It was then cooked, usually by a youth who acted as general assistant, informant, guide, mentor and censor, but sometimes by myself or by another bachelor, and shared, as was the custom, among any bachelors who were around at the time. As was also the custom, I was adopted by a woman whose husband was away, but who still had his hunting net and sent it out each day with her stepson. She also sometimes cooked for me, and always built my hut, as she did for the rest of her family.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

entrance to his hut so that it no longer looked directly at Amabosu's, which would have been taken as indicating extreme intimacy, but instead faced narrowly across to the hut of his wife's uncle (C), Masisi; Masisi's son's wife (D), who was not only kin to Ekianga's young wife but close friends with her, promptly added to her hut, despite her husband's protests, and faced it boldly toward Ekianga. Ekianga's young wife, Kamaikan, responded the next day by facing her hut in the direction of her friend, at the same time deflecting it away from her co-wife's hut, Arobanai (A), next door. Arobanai had on the day of her arrival made an addition facing toward Kamaikan as a conciliatory gesture, but in face of this rebuff she turned the entrance of her hut away again. Meanwhile Masisi's lineal cousin, Manyalibo, made no effort to enter the dispute, but rather turned slightly toward the rest of the camp. Masisi contented himself with completing the entrance to his hut on the second day, leaving it facing the way it was. An extension he built several days later, as did Ausu, was merely to provide separate accommodation for young girls who were approaching puberty.

In the rest of the camp similar petty jealousies and hostilities brought about similar clusterings. Njobo (W-1A), for instance, was an unusually dominating personality, and was consequently accorded, or took, the position of *capita*, representing the band in all matters concerning the village. But he was unwise enough to try and assert the same authority in the forest, and the over-all layout of the camp shows clearly how he and his sister's son, Asuku (W-3A), whom he favored, were ostracized. His wife Masamba (X) built my hut for me, as women sometimes do for adult bachelor kinsmen, to one side, and another hut for strangers on the other side. Maipé (G), the son of another of Njobo's sisters, was the only one to allow his hut to remain facing toward Njobo. After Njobo had left, Nikiabo (H) joined the camp and Masamba built his hut for him, facing toward her own, saying she needed a friend. Makubasi (U), a prominent hunter and a member of the same clan as Njobo, but of a different lineage, turned his hut away on the second day, isolating Njobo in the middle of the clearing. At this, Njobo and his nephew, Asuku, joined their huts together, using only one entrance facing across to Njobo's other nephew, Maipé. When Makubasi's father, Tungana (T), arrived on the third day, he built his hut so that one entrance nominally faced toward Njobo, but it was generally covered and the other entrance faced clearly into the southwestern section of the camp.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.313]

MEDICAL TREATMENT

The following list represents only a third of the total number of treatments noted; for the rest it was not possible to obtain exact identification of the plants used. Only the general identification is given below of the treatments cited here, the full details being lodged with Smith, Kline, & French, who generously supported the project.

HEADACHE: *amongolo pepé* (menispermaceae)
Leaves are pounded and rubbed into forehead.

doré (violaceae)
Seeds are pressed, and the juice is lightly rubbed on the forehead.

sungusungu (orchidaceae)
Leaves are roasted, then rubbed into light incisions in the skin of the forehead.

KNEE ACHE: *amakokosu* (uragoga pedunculari)
Stem, leaf and bloom are roasted, then rubbed into incisions on knee.

tapha (strychnos icaja)
Leaves are roasted and applied to incisions.

SORE THROAT: *kasa* (mapana bieleri)
Leaves are wrapped tightly around the throat.

EYE INFLAMMATION: *manoka* (manotes pruinosa)
Leaves are rubbed well between the hands, then put into a leaf cone. A little water is poured into the cone and allowed to drip into the eye.

STOMACHACHE: *amasobo* (violaceae)
The bark is stripped from young shoots, the core being pounded and roasted. The ashes are rubbed into incisions made over the afflicted area.

apisikalukba (araceae)
Leaves are pounded, water added, warmed, and drunk.

karama (dracaena maculata)
The leaves are pounded with salt, mixed with water, the concoction drunk. (The juice of the pounded leaf, without salt, is also put in the eyes of children "to make them see well.")

ebambu (annonaceae)
Bark is cut into small pieces, water is poured over it; when the water is red, a small quantity is drunk.

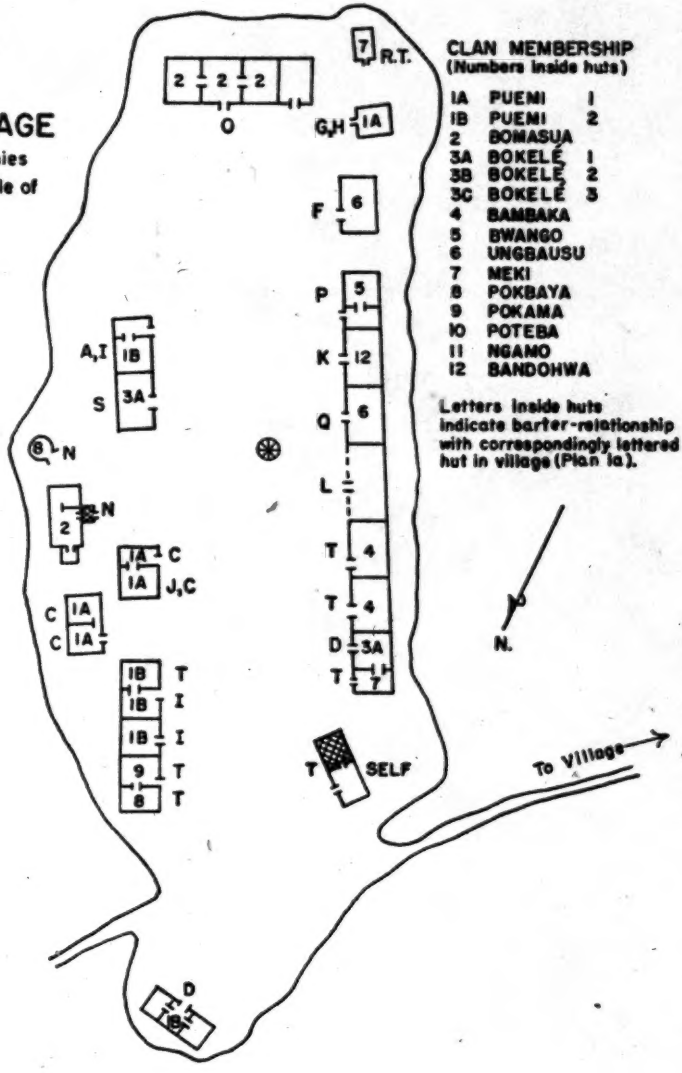
2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

C
439
177
P
*177
439
361
614
122
221
102

Plan Ib

EPULU VILLAGE

Camp of Pygmies
(About twice scale of Plan Ia)



CLAN MEMBERSHIP
(Numbers inside huts)

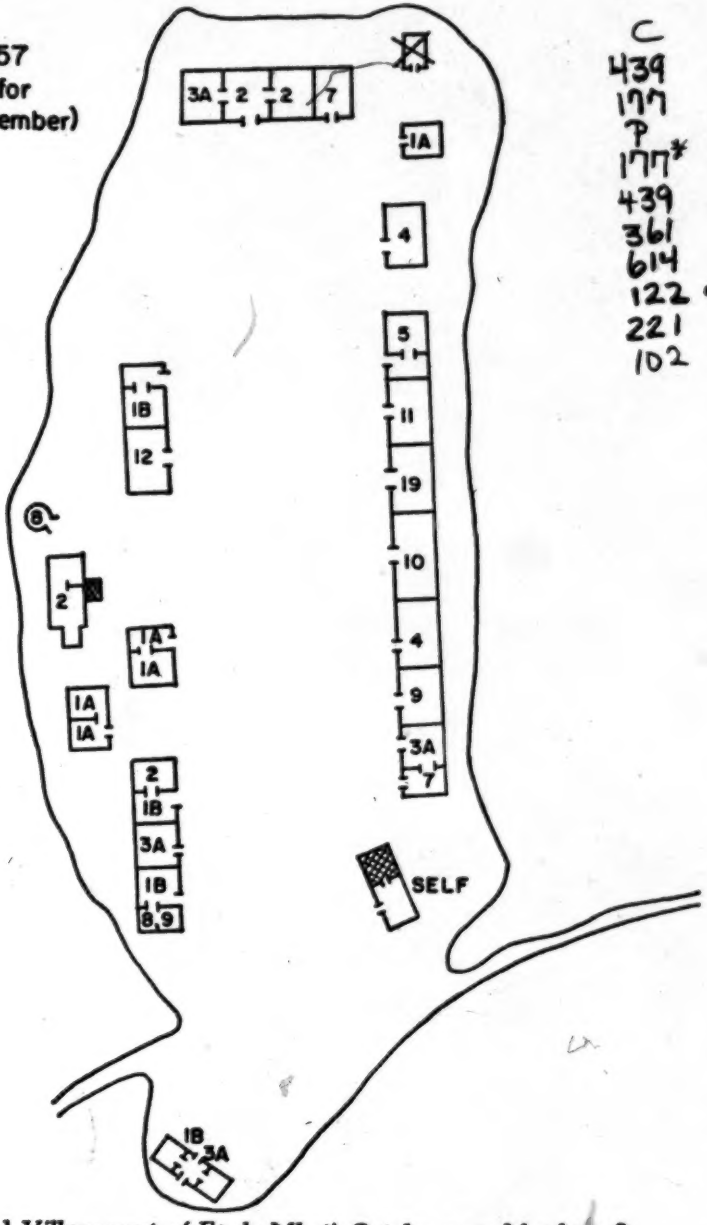
1A	PUENI	1
1B	PUENI	2
2	BOMASUA	
3A	BOKELE	1
3B	BOKELE	2
3C	BOKELE	3
4	BAMBAKA	
5	BWANGO	
6	UNGBAUSU	
7	MEKI	
8	POKBAYA	
9	POKAMA	
10	POTEBA	
11	NGAMO	
12	BANDOHWA	

Letters inside huts indicate barter-relationship with correspondingly lettered hut in village (Plan Ia).

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

C
439
177
P
177*
439
361
614
122 •
221
102

Plan 2a
OCTOBER 1957
(See Plan 1B for August-September)

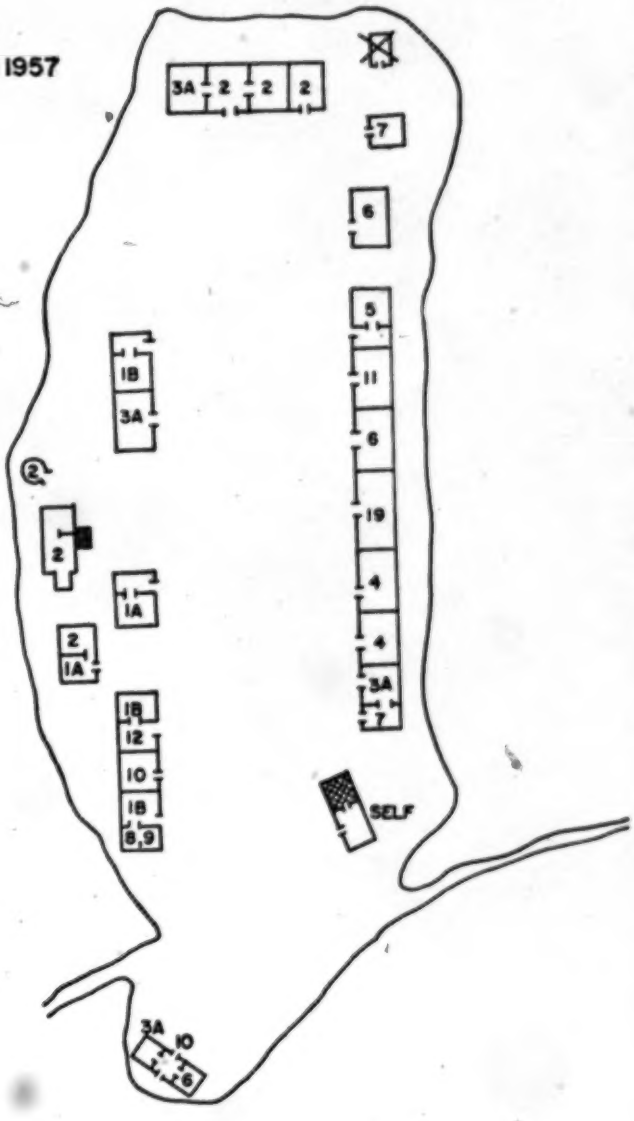


PLAN 2a–d *Village camp of Epulu Mbuti, October 1957–March 1958.*

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

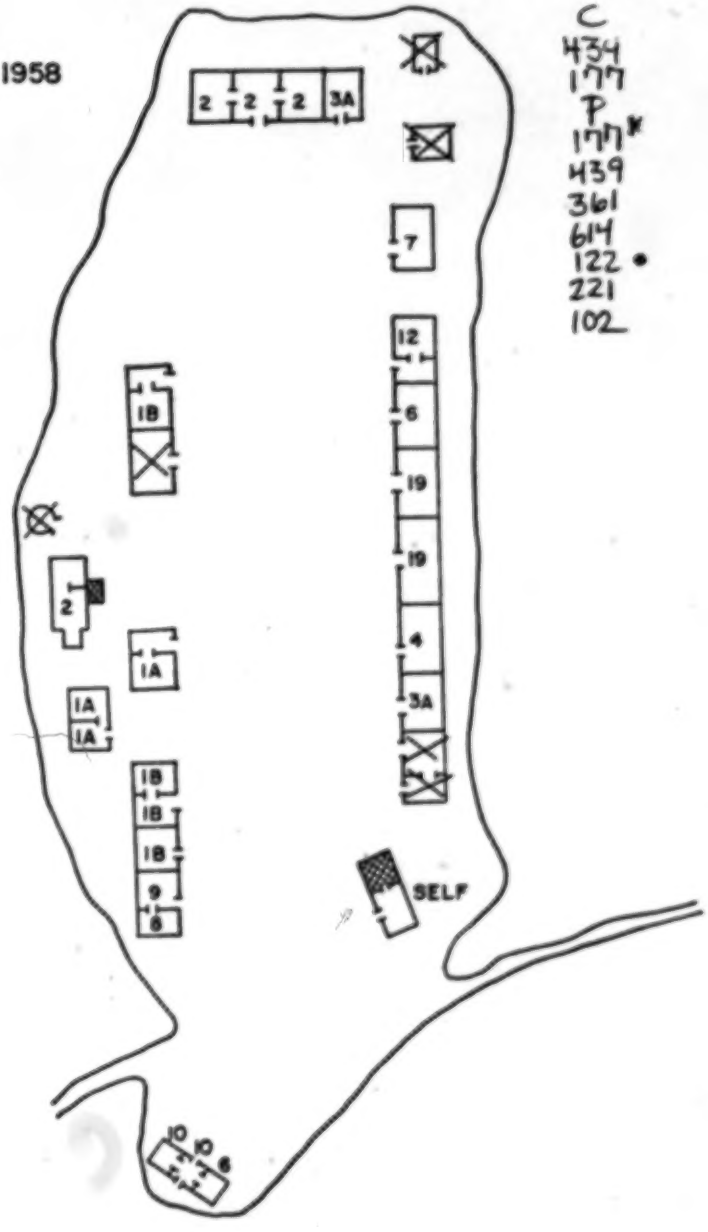
C
439
177
P
F177
439
361
614
122
221
102

Plan 2b
DECEMBER 1957



2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

Plan 2c
FEBRUARY 1958



C
434
177
P
177
439
361
614
122
221
102

338

C
439
177
P
177
439
361
614
122
221
102

Plan 2d
MARCH 1958

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

361
614
592
122

Plan 3a-g KEY

= Baraza (meeting veranda)

= Hut

= Abandoned hut

= Living but not in camp

= Hearth, used by more than one nuclear family

= Brush and tree trunks that effectively divide a camp

	CLAN	TOTEM		CLAN	TOTEM
1A,1B	PUEMI	2	11	NGAMO	1
2	BOMASUA	1	12	BANDOHWA	2
3A,B,C	BOKELÉ	3,1,6	13	POYA	4
4	BAMBAKA	6	14	MOLOMBA	4
5	BWANGO	1	15	POTOLA	1
6	UNGBAUSU	2	16	PASAMA	5
7	MEKI	4	17	PONGWANA	2
8	POKBAYA	1	18	PUKENA	1
9	POKAMA	6	19	PUSA	7
10	POTEBA	1	20	PUMA	4

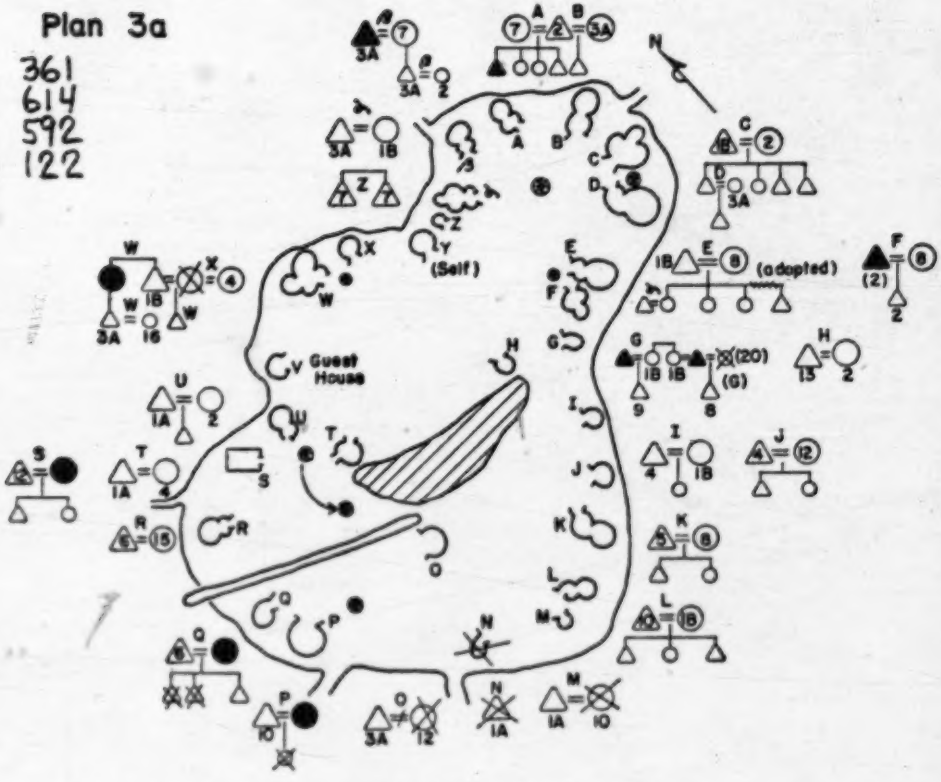
TOTEMS: 1 LEOPARD
2 CHIMPANZEE
3 BUFFALO
4 SNAKE
5, 6, 7 Different kinds of rare antelope

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

/Epulu band/

Plan 3a

361
614
592
122



PLAN 3a–g *Composition of hunting camps cited p. 98 for large and small camps of Epulu band.*

2: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

/Epulu band/

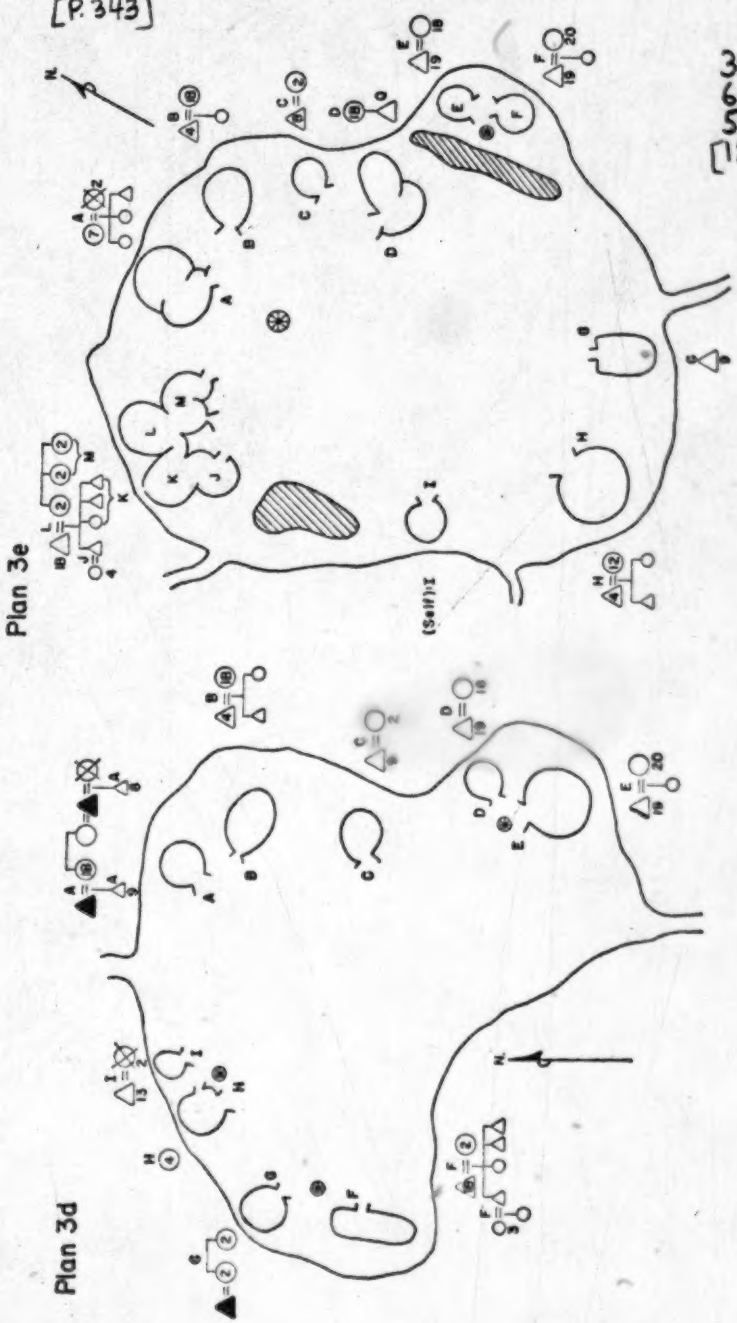
361
614
592
122

Plan 3b

/Epulu band/

[P. 343]

361
614
592
[122]



3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

group, as often happens. But Kenge was his son by another wife, from a totally unrelated group. By Njobo's sister his father had one daughter, and she was Kenge's only real blood relative in the whole group. This was important, as it enabled him to flirt with almost any of the other girls, with the added spice of its being thought incestuous, because they belonged to his group even though they were totally unrelated.

Since I had been with them before, the group had changed slightly, with a few additions and subtractions. At their suggestion I decided to build my own house in their village camp. It looked as if we were in for a long spell in the village. The camp was in a strategic position between the village of the workers of the motel and Station de Chasse and that of Camp Putnam, near the stores and the beer house, and—even more important—near all the surrounding plantations. Progressive old Tungana said that it was a good site because tourists could drive close by and take their photographs and give them money. Manyalibo, in his dry way, said the only good thing about it was that it was close to the plantations so he didn't have to go far to steal his food. The youngsters liked it because it was near the houses of Negro villagers, where they could go begging for cigarettes, old clothes, and palm wine.

It looked, in fact, as if these Pygmies had become as professional as those that line the roadside at Beni, on the edge of the forest, selling their services to tourists, letting themselves be photographed doing things they would never do in the forest, wearing clothes they wouldn't wear except in a village, even selling the tourist weapons used only by Negroes. But Moke reassured me. His face wrinkled up in smiles, and in his soft, toothless voice he told me not to worry, that we would all be back in the forest long before my house was finished. "That is where we belong," he said, "and we shall return soon. We cannot refuse the forest." He was right, but it was in

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

closed on hinges. The only other hut to have a door was that of Njobo, which was at the opposite end and also faced down the middle, but not quite so blatantly as Ekianga's. The rest had leaf-covered frames which were simply pulled across the opening to close it.

My house was built opposite Njobo's, with the old witch Sau and her son Amabosu to my right. At first the Pygmies were going to build me the biggest house ever built in the forest—bigger than Camp Putnam. We finally compromised and when the framework of interlaced saplings was finished I had two rooms, each about ten feet square. Even so, I knew it would never be finished, for by then the number of workers was dropping off rapidly; so I suggested mudding the walls of only one room, but leafing the whole roof so that our "village" would have a veranda. This was thought to be a fine idea.

One day I was on my way out to the plantation with Kenge, Manyalibo and Moke, when on the way we met Cephu's handsome nephew, Kelemoke, a very light-skinned youth who had two children even lighter than he. He was wailing and crying, and told us that Cephu's daughter, only a few years old, had just died. He then continued on his way, wailing loudly. I expected the others to turn back, but they continued as though nothing had happened. Kenge made some remark about Cephu's virility and the others snorted with laughter. Kenge had the charming habit of laughing at his own jokes, which seemed funnier to him the more he thought about them, so he was still clapping his side and doubling up and shouting to the forest what a funny joke it was when we reached the plantation. Then he stopped. Although we could see nobody, Moke called out quietly that Cephu's daughter had died, and Njobo and Masisi and a few others appeared from where they had been "working," looking rather cross at being disturbed. Njobo said it was a nuisance. The girl was his wife's niece, and this meant that his wife would keep

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

and moved on. Yet when we had cut enough and were at the far edge of the mongongo grove, they knew exactly where each bundle had been put, and retraced their steps gathering the leaves as they went. Only then, when all the leaves were collected together, did they relax and talk, and pick a few wild berries with which to refresh themselves. Then they cut lengths of vine and softened it by running it quickly from hand to hand, pulling it sharply through the fork of the thumb. They laughed when I tried this and cut myself. With this vine they tied up the bundles, gave me the largest, and we set off on the way back, as fast as we had come.

As we came through the glade on the hillside above the Lelo we heard the voices of women and the laughter and shouting of children from the camp across the river, and when we got down lower and were wading through the cool stream, washing off all the dirt and perspiration, we could see long columns of smoke spiraling lazily upward through the trees. The camp was coming to life.

The clearing was full of activity. About twenty families had arrived, and each had already put up the framework of its little house. Arobanai and Loku, Ekianga's two senior wives, put their houses side by side at the north end of the camp, leaving a space for Ekianga and Kamaikan when they came out. Masisi's eldest son, Ageronga, helped his wife build their house between Masisi's and Loku's. Old Sau had already almost finished her hut, between my hillock and Arobanai's but closer to Arobanai, on the far side of the path that led off to the Lelo. Masamba was finishing the frame for her house; mine was complete, except for a few extra sticks and leaves needed for the doorway. She had done mine first. Now she squatted down making her own home, driving the saplings into the ground with sharp thrusts, each time in exactly the same place, so that they went deeper and deeper. When she had completed a circle she stood up and deftly bent the fito over her head, twisting them together and twining smaller saplings across, forming a lattice frame-

work. Then she took the leaves we had collected and slit the stalks toward the end, like clothespins, hooking two or three of them together. When she had enough she started hanging them on the framework like tiles, overlapping each other and forming a waterproof covering. There were leaves left over when she had finished, so she let other women take them for their houses.

Everyone was working at something, and all were chattering and making fun of the late-comers who had not yet finished leafing their huts, saying how wet they were going to get when the rain came. But I noticed that those who had already finished, like Masamba, even went back to the forest to cut more wood and leaves to help the lazy stragglers who had spent too much time gathering food and eating it on the way in. Sometimes there were as many as four women working on one hut, some hanging leaves from the outside, working upward, others preferring to work from the inside, pushing the leaves through the lattice and working from the top down. Once in a while there was a loud wail as some playful child got in the way and was soundly slapped by his mother.

Just before dusk there was a sudden darkening and a wind swept through the tree tops making leaves and small branches fall to the ground, spinning and fluttering lightly. Then with a sudden hissing sound, loud and ominous, the sky seemed to open and the rain came pouring down. In the villages, the rain comes down so hard that it can almost hurt you, stinging the skin and blowing into the eyes and nose and mouth, but in the forest its fall is broken by the trees and by the time it reaches the ground it has spent its energy.

There were angry shouts from the men as the lightning flashed and the thunder rumbled on and on, and they peered anxiously from the tiny entrances to their huts to see when it was going to end. If it went on too long it would spoil the hunting for tomorrow. My hut was filled with the bachelors, all of whom Kenge had grandly invited in. He explained that they were too old to sleep with their parents

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

and, not being married, had no huts of their own. We had brought our fire into the hut when the rain started, and with the heat of that and of about fifteen bodies I was nearly suffocated. Every now and then the rain found its way through the leaves above and sent a tiny waterfall cascading to the floor. Then someone would stand up and inspect the roof carefully, decide which leaf should be moved, and pushing his fingers through the lattice adjust it. If he moved the wrong leaf it started a leak in another place, bringing howls of annoyance from whoever was beneath. Kenge said it was always like this with a new hut, that was why it was so bad not to be married. If you were married, naturally your wife would get up when it rained at night and fix the roof. But once the leaves had settled down, not even the hardest rain would come in until the leaves got old and dried out and began to curl. Tomorrow, he said, he would cover the roof with dead wood and branches to hold the leaves flat.

The rain lasted only for half an hour, and as soon as it was over everyone came out of the huts. The fires were built up outside again; the women made a few adjustments to the roofs where they had found bad leaks; the men wandered off idly with their bows and arrows to see if they could find a bird or monkey for the evening meal before it was too dark. The huts steamed as they dried out, and a blue haze of smoke hung above the camp and was colored suddenly with orange and gold and red as the clouds parted and the sun on the invisible horizon sent a last blaze of light across the sky. The birds burst into a final chorus of song, and two women argued loudly with each other as to which should have the rest of the leaves that Masamba had cut to help them.

Everyone was tired from the long day's trek and from the flurry of building camp so quickly, and as soon as it was dark and the evening meal had been eaten we all crept into our huts and went to sleep. Kenge, seeing that I was a little concerned, had turned some of the bachelors out, so there were only nine of us. For an hour the

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

pulled across the entrances to the little huts, and only the men were left outside.

Njobo was there to greet us, and the first thing he asked was whether I had been able to keep up with the others, or if I had "walked like the BaNgwana." He then turned to the others with an obvious "I told you so" air and said, "You see, it is all right; he knows how to walk." This apparently slight compliment was in fact a very real one, because to the Pygmy it is one of the most important differences between the people of the forest and the people of the village that the latter do *not* know "how to walk." Walking, to the Pygmy, means being able to run swiftly and silently, without slipping, tripping or falling. Every day he depends for his food on his ability to "walk," and more than once his life will be saved by the same ability, when he has to run from a charging buffalo or creep away unnoticed from a sleeping leopard.

Masisi, unbelieving, asked if I had not fallen at least once, and when he was told I had, he roared with laughter. Masimongo, who had been another to object to my going, pointed to my torn clothes, dripping with water and perspiration, and filthy where I had fallen, and he too laughed. Nobody mentioned the molimo.

Kenge came up and asked disapprovingly why I had gone off so quickly without telling him. He said he had cooked dinner and now it was all cold and I would have to go without. He gave my clothes a withering look and said he would wash them out the next day, and that I had better take them off now and get dry. I went over to my hut and changed, and when I came out he had a piping hot meal waiting by a blazing fire.

What followed that evening was to follow every evening for the next two months. It was the focal point of the molimo festival, and the repetition every night was an essential part of it. The ceremony, if you can call it that, did not center around ritual objects, as do the

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

9

The World of the Village

P
C
114
122
P
C
136

I FOUND THE FIRST WEEK back in the village difficult and depressing. During the day the air was hot and dry, and filled with fine particles of dust. At night, when it was cooler, gnats and mosquitoes made me appreciate all the more their absence in the forest. My hut, ten times the size of my home in the hunting camp, seemed close and stuffy, and as I lay in bed I could hear the huge spiders, some several inches across, crawling about in the leaves of the roof. Occasionally one dropped onto the bed with a dull thud and lay there for a while before stalking away. At first I carried out an active campaign to get rid of them, but it was useless—and a mosquito net would have been unbearably hot.

3: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

THE WORLD OF THE VILLAGE

The familiar night sounds of the forest were replaced by the cries of drunks coming home from a dance at the nearby Hotel de Bière, where an antique Victrola ground out records of the African version of the Calypso, imported from the coast. In the Negro village there were constant fights—not the wordy fights of the Pygmies, but good old-fashioned fisticuffs. These were likely to occur at any time of night, depending on how late it was when an outraged husband, returning from a rendezvous with his current girl friend, reached his own hut to find his wife in bed with someone else.

In our small Pygmy village the fires were all brought inside at night, and the smoke helped to keep away the mosquitoes. The doors were pulled tight shut, and nobody slept out in the open. Just an occasional murmured comment on the noise made by "those black savages" was all that was heard, none of the usual cheerful gossip that used to go on every night until, one by one, the hunters fell asleep.

But in the very dead of night I could hear the sound of crickets from the forest, reminding me that it was, after all, not so far away, and all around us. Sometimes when the moon was full I wandered around the sleeping village, to the edges of the plantations. There the forest stood up into the night like a great black wall, surrounding this small circle, cut so ineffectively out of its very heart. It rose up all around, confident in the knowledge that it would soon claim its own and grow back more thickly than ever, where it had been cut. There were several such abandoned villages nearby, not long abandoned; yet already the forest towered above them in the unsmiling triumph of inevitability. The forest destroyed everything but its own. Only against the machine age, which had barely reached it, was it powerless.

In the very early hours the forest made itself felt, but close as it was it faded far away with the coming of dawn. The morning sounds of cocks crowing, goats bleating, and the elephants of the Station de

3: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

P 114 I asked Kenge if he would like to come with me and was not surprised when he packed off Maliamo to stay with his mother. Nothing would have stopped Kenge from making our projected tour of the forest. We decided to circle the area by following the road around the fringes, stopping wherever it seemed expedient and setting off by foot. I took a supply of notebooks and pencils, a typewriter, and a couple of changes of clothes. Kenge not only brought two changes of clothes, specially purchased at the local stores for the occasion, but also a huge old charcoal-heated flatiron. He said that we would probably be going through large cities and meeting big people, and he wanted to show them that we were not savages.

P [122] P [186]

Our first stop was the headquarters of the BaNdaka chief, at the village of Bafwakoa. It was a comfortable day's drive, and we arrived late in the afternoon, having stopped at almost every village on the way. The news of our coming had gone before us, in the strange way that news travels in Africa, from village to village. When we reached Bafwakoa, Chief Kachui was sitting out on his veranda waiting to greet us, surrounded by his official advisers and some of his family.

C 622 563 P 115 123 Kachui was an old man, and a leper, and he knew enough of Europeans not to offer to shake hands with strangers. But we had met several times before, and he clasped both my hands warmly in his and made me sit down beside him. I introduced Kenge as a friend, and with great aplomb the powerful old man called for another chair to be brought. This was the first time, I am sure, that such an honor had been done a Pygmy by this severe and conventional chief. We talked a long while. I made it quite plain that he could talk freely in front of Kenge, and he did so. He said that he "owned" several hundred Pygmies, and they were really more trouble than they were worth. "Here it is, time for the cotton crop to be brought in, and still I can not get the Pygmies to come back from the forest. They say the hunting is too good, but if it is, then why do I get no meat?

P [439]

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

14

The World Beyond

WE STOCKED UP WITH FOOD—stalks of plantains, a basket of rice, a large bundle of manioc roots, some dried fish and a large quantity of peanuts, and forest tomatoes, onions and peppers, with which I knew Kenge would make a delicious sauce. In case I could not persuade him to use local water for coffee, all I could think of in the way of acceptable liquid was beer.

We drove down to Beni, where the forest ends, passing through it in a violent storm that cut the visibility down to a few yards. It was almost impossible to see the edges of the road, and Kenge was not even aware that we had left the forest. But he noticed that we were

ing all our honey to the east. Masisi immediately sent his son with Madyadya to tell Manyalibo to forget the quarrel about the nets and come and join him at once at Apa Kadiketu so that we could all make war on the other Pygmies together. He also sent Kelemoke with the same message to Cephu. We pressed on and built our camp in a hum of excitement.

Kenge saw that I was taking this all very seriously, and he led me to one side. "Old Masisi's head is unsteady," he said. "It has worms in it. He will fight only with words. Every year those Pygmies come into our land and we go into theirs. There is plenty of food; so long as we do not meet there is no fighting. If we do meet, then those who are not in their own land run away and leave behind whatever they have stolen. That is the only way we ever fight—we are not villagers."

But it was a wonderful fight of words, particularly when Ekianga and the others joined us. There was so much disagreement that Masisi said he was not ready to live in the same camp with them yet, and he removed himself to another camp about half a mile away. Cephu, still not sure which way the wind was blowing, camped between the two, and to one side, making a perfect triangle. For a whole week messengers were being sent back and forth. Eventually the invaders, presumably having had their fill of honey, retreated across the Epulu, declaring that never again would they enter such inhospitable territory.

But everyone was far too busy scouring the countryside and marking out new honey trees to be seriously bothered. It was strange to see how this familiar old camp took new shape. Any vestiges of old huts were cleared away, except for the remains of the one where I had lived, and that of Ekianga, both of which were made better and bigger. I did not take my old hut but moved to the far end, where Cephu had been, near to Moke. Ekianga and all his three wives, now on good terms with one another, were to the other side of me.